

Improvements to the provision of policing services in West Devon

The current situation.

Policing in West Devon (and indeed across the Force) is currently divided into 3 main strands, supported by many force-wide resources.

1. The Response strand is the core 'emergency service, and is made up of officers working a 24 hour shift pattern. There are 21 constables in this strand. Response officers are based at Tavistock and Okehampton.
2. The Neighbourhood Team is made up of 2 sergeants called NTLs (one at each station), 6 constables (3 at each station) called NBMs and 11 PCSOs (6 at Tavistock and 5 at Okehampton). These officers work limited hours – NTLs and NBMs work no later than 4am and PCSOs finish at 10pm.
3. Investigation strand. Okehampton has a dedicated detective but the Local Investigation Team for Tavistock is based at Plymouth. Crimes committed in Plymouth and the surrounding area, including Tavistock, are investigated by officers from this team, but there are no officers dedicated to Tavistock.

The future

There is absolutely no move to downgrade Neighbourhood cover and the changes will actually increase the number of named officers for each Beat area. The current uniformed officers in the Response and Neighbourhood Team are now amalgamated to form a core body of 25 'Community Constables, all carrying out Neighbourhood, Investigation and 24 hr Response to incidents. These officers will work in 5 sections, which is the minimum number required to provide 24 hour shift cover on the current (and proposed future) shift pattern.

There are currently two dedicated Neighbourhood Team Leader (Neighbourhood Sergeants) based in West Devon. Supervision of Response staff and incidents for West Devon is managed by a larger team of Sergeants who manage incidents and staff for the whole of North AND West Devon. This means that at times the Sgt can be supervising West Devon staff from as far afield as Ilfracombe which clearly does not provide local accountability. Moving forward West Devon will now have five local Community Sergeants who will carry out the Neighbourhood and Response Sergeant role for the area.

The PCSO role will not change at all at this stage. Discussions are still going on around line management but this will not concern outside agencies. Nationally and within force there are discussions around additional powers, but this is not relevant to the current changes within the Sector.

West Devon will be getting back its investigative arm. A Detective Sergeant is already in post to supervise both stations, and shortly three detectives will start work at Tavistock and a fourth will join the existing detective at Okehampton. One detective will be linked to each of the five uniformed sections of five constables and a sergeant.

Presently, there are seven neighbourhood beat areas, with a Neighbourhood Beat Manager (NBM) post dedicated to six of the areas. Two of these officers, one at each station, will continue in a dedicated core NBM role, but they will be carrying out a new role dedicated to problem solving, safeguarding and key partnership engagement. This new role will combine operational and administrative duties for all the beats at the station supported by PCSO's and officers from the sections. The other officers who were previously designated as NBMs will join the uniformed sections providing 24 hour cover.

COUNCILLOR BRIEFING NOTES

The core NBMs will be responsible for identifying more strategic problems and issues across all of the beats within their police area and co-ordinating and tasking both police and partners, ensuring they are dealt with and resolved, rather than dealing with all the issues themselves.

The 25 new Community Officers will pick up much of the 'hands on' work, and to that end each of them will be 'attached' to one of the beat areas. When not responding to emergencies, each officer will be expected to pay attention to the area they are attached to. There will be 3 officers attached to each rural beat and 5 to each of the town beats. Naturally there will be abstractions due to leave, sickness etc. but on the whole there should be an officer paying attention to each beat area for a greater proportion of the working week than is currently the case. There is a further benefit in that the current beat managers are likely to want to be 'attached' to the area they currently work in. The other officers attached to that beat will benefit from working with them and can be introduced to councillors, groups and organisations local to the area.

The website will be updated shortly with photographs and names of the officers for each of the Beat areas.

There will need to be a period of time for partners and residents to get to know their named officers but mainly the same officer who covered before does so now with additional support from other named officers.

The re-structure will not mean that we can take on additional Neighbourhood work but it does protect Neighbourhood Policing in West Devon and mean that through shared ownership knowledge of local Neighbourhood issues should be increased.

Summary

- The number of uniformed staff at both police stations will remain the same.
- West Devon will gain back its own team of detectives.
- Neighbourhood work will be shared by teams of 3 for the rural areas and teams of 5 for Tavistock and Okehampton town centres, as opposed to one dedicated officer currently for each.
- West Devon will become more self-contained. Communication will be easier. An improved ability to brief as a group should improve efficiency.
- 5 of the NBMs will no longer be called NBMs, but they will continue to work on their beat areas and encouraged to share local knowledge and experience with the other uniformed officers for their beat area. None of these skills will be lost and levels of local knowledge should increase.
- The PCSO posts remain the same in role and numbers.
- The 2 NTLs will share their experience of Neighbourhood Policing with the other 3 sergeants, and all sergeants will assume shared responsibility for Neighbourhood Policing. As with the NBMs, sharing the load means that a sergeant will be available more often - albeit not always the same sergeant.